to this was the reduction in available tonnage caused by war and marine losses, and by the falling-off in the rate of shipbuilding during the first two years of war. When the vessels withdrawn for war services, and those sunk and lost, were subtracted from our original total, there was nothing like enough tonnage left to maintain our imports at the pre-War level. The question was not : shall we have fewer imports ? That was inevitable. It was : shall we deliberately cut away the imports we can do without, and concentrate on those that are essential; or shall we leave it to chance, in the hope that without choice or direction the most important commodities will find their way to us ?

Causes of fault in way in which successive Ministers dealt with this question of imports.

Nothing could be more significant of the change which the Second Coalition introduced into the handling of our shipping resources than Sir Joseph Maclay and Mr. Runciman were both shipowners ; the former by practice, the latter by parentage. While Sir Joseph Maclay grappled with the problem on the principle that complete control was vital, Mr. Runciman's treatment of it suffered from that spirit of procrastination and timidity, from that readiness to assume that something resolved at a Committee was thereby an accomplished fact, which

in this and other Departments of State brought us by the end of 1916 perilously near the precipice.

In 1913, the imports into this country totalled nearly 53 million tons in weight. In the first year of the War, despite the enormously increased pressure of demand for goods, they fell to 50 million tons. The main discriminating factor which